

# Special Mission



The U.S. Navy's  
**MILITARY•SEALIFT•COMMAND**

The Special Mission Program is composed of:

Submarine and Special Warfare Support Ships

Oceanographic Survey Ships

Ocean Surveillance Ships

Missile Range Instrumentation Ships

Acoustic Survey Ship

Navigation Test Support Ship

Cable Laying/Repair Ship

Command Ship

High-Speed Vessel

Harbor Tug and Port Services



# Special Mission

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ilitary Sealift Command's Special Mission Program has about 30 ships that provide operating platforms and services for a wide variety of U.S. military and other U.S. government missions.

Oceanographic and hydrographic surveys, underwater surveillance, missile tracking, acoustic surveys, command and control, and submarine and special warfare support are just a few of the specialized services provided to:

- U.S. Fleet Forces Command
- The Oceanographer of the Navy
- Commander, Undersea Surveillance
- The U.S. Air Force
- Naval Sea Systems Command
- Navy's Strategic Systems Programs Office
- Naval Special Warfare Command
- Commander, Navy Installations Command
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Commander, Submarine Force

Most special mission ships are operated by civilian mariners who work for private companies under contract to MSC. Only two ships, USS Mount Whitney and USNS Zeus, are crewed by MSC's civil service mariners.

Two more ships – both submarine tenders – are transferring to MSC for civil service crewing in 2008 and 2009. Technical work and communication support are conducted by embarked military personnel, as well as civilian technicians from other military commands and U.S. government agencies.



*MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Henson cuts a prominent profile at a Mediterranean port where the ship was visited by hundreds of members of the International Hydrographic Organization.*

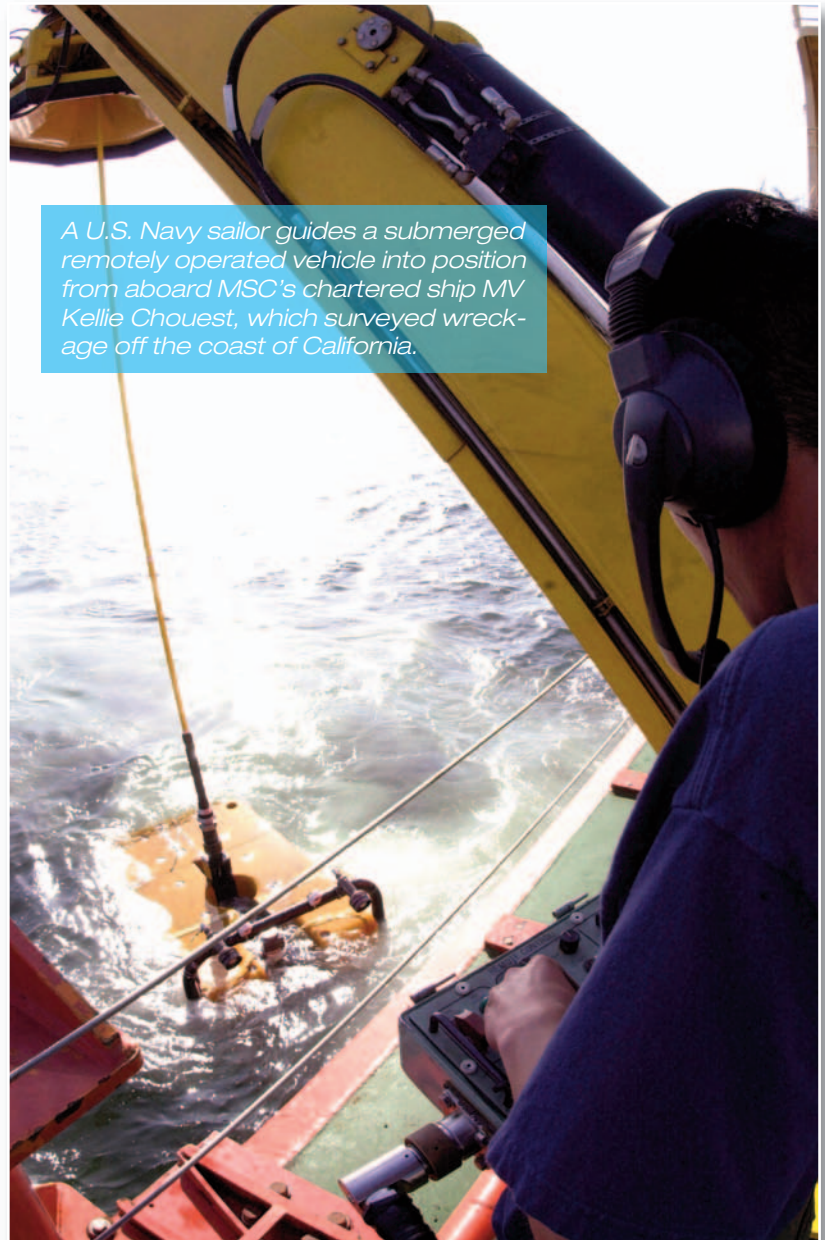
*The MSC-chartered MV HOS Greystone, measuring 240 feet in length, escorts a U.S. Navy submarine returning from deployment.*



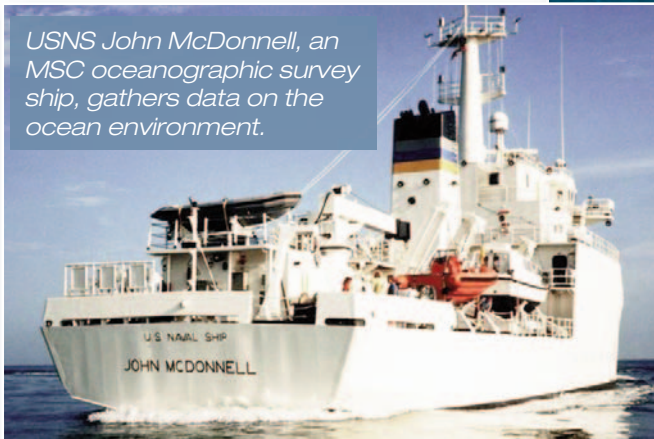


### Submarine And Special Warfare Support Ships

MSC operates eight chartered submarine and special warfare support ships for the Navy. Two ships provide deep submergence/salvage support and submarine/escort rescue assistance for the Navy's submarine forces. Two ships support the Naval Special Warfare Command. Four other ships were chartered in 2007 to support the Navy's submarine escort requirements while entering and leaving ports.



*A U.S. Navy sailor guides a submerged remotely operated vehicle into position from aboard MSC's chartered ship MV Kellie Chouest, which surveyed wreckage off the coast of California.*



*USNS John McDonnell, an MSC oceanographic survey ship, gathers data on the ocean environment.*

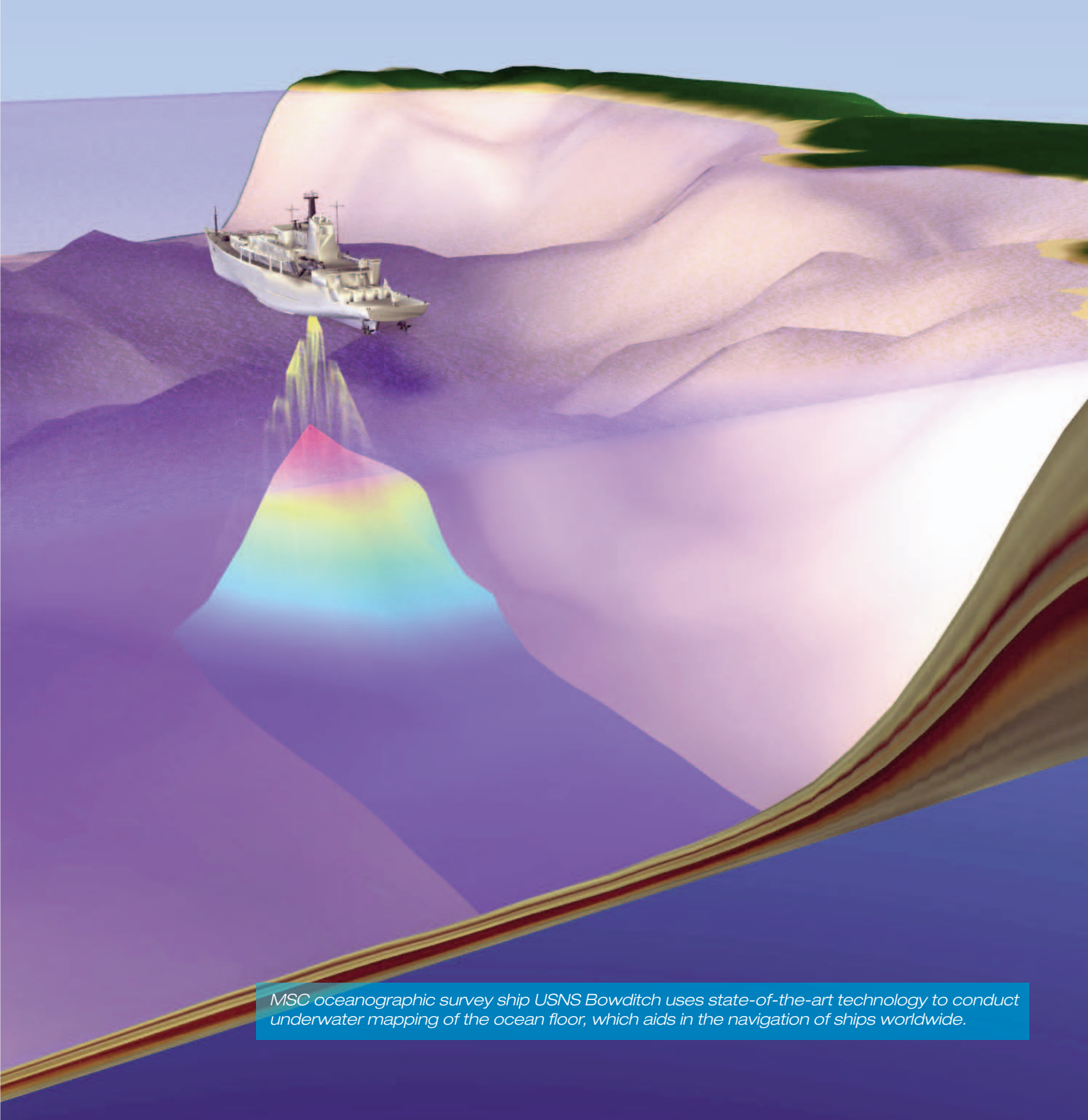
### **Oceanographic Survey Ships**

MSC operates seven oceanographic survey ships. Six of these ships are multi-purpose and perform acoustic, biological, physical and geophysical surveys, providing much of the U.S. military's information on the ocean environment. These ships use multi-beam, wide-angle, precision sonar systems that make it possible to continuously chart a broad section of ocean floor. Another oceanographic survey ship, USNS John McDonnell, collects data in coastal regions around the world. The data collected helps improve technology in undersea warfare, enemy ship detection and charting the world's coastlines.



*MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Sumner's crew members prepare an apparatus that the ship uses to track ocean currents.*





*MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Bowditch uses state-of-the-art technology to conduct underwater mapping of the ocean floor, which aids in the navigation of ships worldwide.*



*USNS Loyal is one of MSC's five ocean surveillance ships that work directly with the Navy's fleets, listening for undersea threats.*

### **Ocean Surveillance Ships**

Five ocean surveillance ships directly support the Navy by using both passive and active low frequency sonar arrays to detect and track undersea threats.



### Missile Range Instrumentation Ships

MSC's two missile range instrumentation ships provide platforms for monitoring missile launches and collecting data that can be used to improve missile efficiency and accuracy. USNS Observation Island and USNS Invincible monitor foreign missile and weapons tests that may pose potential threats to air or surface navigation. These ships also monitor domestic weapons systems tests to provide valuable feedback to U.S. weapons systems designers.



*MSC missile range instrumentation ship USNS Observation Island conducts missions sponsored by the U.S. Air Force.*



*MSC's acoustic survey ship USNS Hayes operates in support of the Navy's submarine noise reduction program.*

### Acoustic Survey Ship

Acoustic survey ship USNS Hayes supports Naval Sea Systems Command and the Naval Surface Warfare Center in conducting sound-measuring surveys as part of the U.S. Navy's submarine noise reduction program. The ship transports, deploys and retrieves acoustic arrays. Hayes' catamaran design provides a stable platform for survey operations.

### Navigation Test Support Ship

Navigation test support ship USNS Waters supports the Navy's Strategic Systems Programs Office by assisting with submarine weapons and navigation system testing. The ship tracks missile test launches from Navy submarines to collect important performance data. The ship also conducts operational tests of upgrades to submarine navigation systems.



*MSC's navigation test support ship USNS Waters undergoes a routine overhaul at a commercial drydock.*



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### Cable Laying/Repair Ship

MSC operates one cable laying/repair ship that transports, deploys, retrieves and repairs undersea cables. Built specifically for the Navy, USNS Zeus can lay up to 1,000 miles of cable in depths up to 9,000 feet during a single deployment before having to restock its cable supply.



*MSC's USNS Zeus is the only active cable laying/repair ship in the U.S. Navy.*



### Command Ship

The Special Mission Program operates command ship USS Mount Whitney, which transferred to MSC in 2004 and deployed to the Mediterranean Sea as the U.S. Navy's 6th Fleet command ship. Civil service mariners perform navigation, deck, engineering, laundry and galley service operations while military personnel aboard support communications, weapons systems and security.

### High-Speed Vessel

MSC's chartered commercial vessel HSV-2 Swift is operated by U.S. Fleet Forces Command, headquartered in Norfolk, Va. The ship, which is crewed by Navy personnel, conducts missions in support of the Navy's littoral ship program. The HSV continues to be of high interest to the Navy because of its shallow draft and high speed.



*The catamaran design of MSC-chartered HSV-2 Swift makes it ideal for littoral missions.*



## Harbor Tug And Port Services

The Special Mission Program manages harbor tug and port services contracts on behalf of Commander, Navy Installations Command to support Navy ships worldwide. The contracts cover operations at most Navy locations, including: San Diego; Kings Bay, Ga.; Mayport, Fla.; Pearl Harbor; Norfolk, Va.; New London, Conn.; Guam and others. MSC also contracts for other port services in Pensacola, Fla.; Key West, Fla.; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Panama City, Fla., and Pearl Harbor. MSC's operation of these commercial contracts frees up military personnel for their war-fighting missions.



*MSC contracts for harbor tug services to support Navy ships worldwide.*



*A U.S. Navy submarine pulls alongside submarine tender USS Frank Cable in Guam. Cable provides vital services to submarines while away from their homeports.*

## A New Addition: Submarine Tenders

Submarine tenders USS Emory S. Land and USS Frank Cable are scheduled to transfer to MSC in 2008 and 2009. Sub tenders, like command ships, are unique in that they have both uniformed Navy personnel and civil service mariners serving under the leadership of a U.S. Navy captain, which allows the ships to retain their commissioned status.

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## Special Mission Support: An Enduring Mission

Military Sealift Command first began operating special mission ships in 1958 with four vessels that collected marine science data for the Navy and other U.S. government agencies.

For half a century, the unique blend of MSC ships working side by side with scientists and technicians from various U.S. government agencies has greatly increased the world's knowledge of Earth's hydrosphere. MSC's special mission ships continue to make it possible to better understand, manage and interact with undersea land masses, global waterways and the creatures that inhabit them, including man.

When it comes to ocean-going platforms for unique U.S. government missions, MSC delivers.



*MSC oceanographic survey ships USNS Bruce C. Heezen, USNS John Mc Donnell and USNS Mary Sears refuel in Singapore, joining ocean surveillance ship USNS Loyal.*





*A Navy diver launches for a certification dive of the Atmospheric Diving System aboard MSC-chartered submarine support ship MV Kellie Chouest off the coast of California.*

*Back cover: MSC oceanographic survey ship USNS Bowditch collects water samples that allow the Navy to learn more about the ocean environment.*

# MSC delivers



[www.msc.navy.mil](http://www.msc.navy.mil)